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CHRISTMAS CAROLLIN'

By

CAROLYN WELLS

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ONYX SERIES

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By

CAROLYN WELLS

NEW YORK
FRANKLIN BIGELOW CORPORATION
THE MORNINGSIDE PRESS
PUBLISHERS

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A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

'TIS blessed to bestow, and yet,
Could we bestow the gifts we get,
And keep the ones we give away,
How happy were our Christmas Day!

THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS

WHY, goodness me!" said Percy Gunn,
"Christmas is just a week from SUN!

"This present business is no fun."
Then he sat down to count his MON.

But after paying what was due,
His surplus dollars were but TUE.

Then Percy sadly shook his head,
Thinking of one he fain would WED.

The weather was depressing, too;
For first it friz, and then it THU.

And presents also he must buy
For sisters, aunts, and smaller FRI.

No answer could he find to that.
He sat and thought and thought and SAT.

And sitting still was Percy Gunn
When Christmas came, and it was SUN!

A SAFE AND SANE CHRISTMAS

SCENT of balsam and fir and pine,
Holly ribbon and tissue papers;
Foolish trinkets of gay design,
Strings of tinsel and lighted tapers,
Glittering baubles and shining ropes,
Hung all over the Christmas Tree;
Granted wishes and answered hopes—
This is Christmas as it should be!

Well-filled stockings all in a row,
Lots of uproarious, laughing children,
Railroad trains that will really go—
Drums and horns with a din bewilderin'!
Evergreen wreaths with a big red bow;
Voices rising in carol and glee,
And Mabel under the mistletoe—
This is Christmas as it should be!

A RECOLLECTION

HOW dear to my heart are the old Christmas presents,
When fond recollection presents them to view;
The hand-painted "game sets" with woodcock and pheasants,
The lambrequins, crewel-worked in olive and blue.
The bead sofa-cushion, the knit afghan nigh it,
The tile pipe umbrella-stand, meant for the hall;
The big Rogers Group—(father loved so to buy it!)
And the worsted-work motto to hang on the wall.
The old worsted motto,
The Bristol-board motto,
The rustic framed motto that hung on the wall.

How well I remember the wording upon it;
'Twas "God Bless Our Home" in letters quite wild.
And a worsted-work lady in worsted-work bonnet,
Who held in her arms a worsted-work child.
Some Florida grasses were bunched in behind it;
(Quite dusty,—though cleaned in the spring and the fall.)
I'd give a round sum if I only could find it,—
That old worsted motto that hung on the wall.
The old worsted motto,
The Bristol-board motto,
The rustic framed motto that hung on the wall.

N. B.—The above is entirely mendacious,
That motto was really a perfect old fright.
And should I recover it,—my goodness gracious!
How quickly I'd tuck it away out of sight.
But poets, you know, at this glad Christmas season
Must be reminiscent, and tender withal;
We must strike a heart-interest, so that is the reason
I sing the old motto that hung on the wall.
The old worsted motto,
The Bristol-board motto,
The rustic framed motto that hung on the wall.

OVERHEARD IN A DEPARTMENT STORE

SO ***hard*** to find things for a man"—
"I do believe I've lost ten dollars!"
"Maude's crazy for a point-lace fan."
"I'm awful tired of sailor collars."

"I ***must*** meet Emmeline at two"—
"But haven't you a ***mauve*** kimono?"
"Oh, that's just elegant for Sue!"
"Who wrote 'The Merchant of Verona'?"

"It isn't only buying ***gifts,***
But holly ribbon—tissue-paper—"
"I ***won't*** go in those crowded lifts!"
"Have you a hammered-brass crumb-scraper?"

"The thing you ***want*** you ***never*** find—"
"Yes, but I s'pose she has a dozen—"
"My ***dear,*** I've simply ***lost*** my ***mind***—"
"What ***shall*** I get for William's cousin?"

"Don't you keep crewels any more?"
"She won't have records that ain't classic—"
"I've tried in every single store—
I can't get grandma that green hassock!"

OVERHEARD IN A DEPARTMENT STORE

Each year the scene comes round again,
With all its care, expense and worry;
But "Peace on earth, good-will to men"
Prompts all this blessed Christmas flurry!

A CHRISTMAS PETITION

'TIS Christmas time! Though we regret
Its many forced expenses,
We pretend to like the gifts we get,
And our friends make like pretenses.

Both, for ourselves, be this our plea,
And for those who recompense us—
Forgive us our Christmases as we
Forgive those who Christmas against us!

AN UNORTHODOX CHRISTMAS

I WENT to spend the day with Rose, and then
A Christmas greeting passed between us two;
But 'twas not "Peace on earth, good-will to men,"
We only said, "Good morning," "How d'ye do?"

And then to her I offered smilingly
The present she expected me to bring;
There were no hanging hose—no Christmas tree—
The box was tied in paper with a string.

We didn't sit beside the Yule-log's blaze,
We just turned on the radiator's steam.
And dinner, unlike those of storied days,
Gave no plum pudding, but some bisque ice cream.

We didn't hear the church bells' solemn toll;
And when we had our Christmas evening lunch,
We didn't have a steaming wassail bowl,
But just a jug of simple claret punch.

We trampled on traditions, I suppose;
Yet one rite we observed with care—but, no,
Although I well remember kissing Rose,
It *wasn't* underneath the mistletoe!

SOME CHRISTMAS BROMIDIOMS

YES, I always mean to get my shopping done early, but I never do."

"It's *so* hard to find gifts for men."

"It doesn't seem possible Christmas is so near."

"It isn't the value of the gifts, it's just the remembrance."

"Oh, if I had plenty of money, Christmas shopping would be easy enough."

"It's awfully hard to select a book."

"It isn't only the gifts, but nowadays you have to have all that tissue paper and holly ribbon and fancy tags."

"It's so hard to find anything for her, because she has everything already."

"Sadie and I don't give presents any more, we just exchange post cards."

"Oh, I never give my husband a Christmas present."

"I wouldn't mind Christmas if it weren't for writing the notes of thanks afterward."

CHRISTMAS EVE

MY childhood's Christmases each brought to me
The wondrous glory of a Christmas tree;
Now, every year, since I've to manhood grown,
I buy a tree for children of my own.
And so to-night my mind looks back and sees
Life a long avenue of Christmas trees.

ETIQUETTE FOR CHRISTMAS

DO not push or crowd ahead of other shoppers. Wait patiently until they have all completed their purchases and then politely state your wants to the girl behind the counter.

Describe to her leisurely what it is you wish to buy. Nothing is more vulgar than an appearance of haste or impatience.

If she hasn't the article you desire, take whatever she has. It doesn't matter. Buy such things as seem shopworn or unattractive. This is true kindness to others. Express no surprise at being obliged to wait a long time for your change. (If literary, carry a volume of Marcus Aurelius to read at these odd hours. If a fairly rapid reader, carry several volumes.)

Have no definite idea of what you want to buy for your friends' gifts. Trust to luck to see just the right thing at the right price. If you don't see it, take something else. It doesn't matter.

Do your Christmas shopping early. Late August or early September is a good time, as there are almost no people in the shops then. Also, almost no goods. But it doesn't matter.

If the week before Christmas you find you have all your gifts bought and no money to buy more, go back and exchange some. It is a shame to miss the festive excitement of the Christmas shopping

crowds. Go to toy counters or notion counters late in the afternoon and you will be annoyed at the result. If you buy a large or bulky parcel, carry it home with you. It adds to the Christmas spirit of the crowd in many ways.

Endeavor to make yourself a conspicuous and animated figure in the crowd of Christmas shoppers. Even without vulgar pushing or jostling, you may manage to impede others' progress, by sudden or undecided movements, by stepping ahead of patient or timid people, by going backward or sideways, or by standing stock-still to read over your list.

Remember all these points, and we may hope for our usual turbulent, excited and hen-minded crowd of Christmas shoppers.

MY CHOICE

SOME may look back with loving eye
At memory's pictures, fading fast,
And murmur, with a long-drawn sigh,
"The happiest time's the past."

While others, lured by hope's bright ray,
Look forward with a zeal and zest,
And in anticipation say,
"The future brings the best."

No past or future hold I dear,
Their vague delights I gladly lose;
The Christmas season now is here—
The present time I choose.

AN IMMINENT DISASTER

AT Christmas-time I don't mind much
Unwelcome and misguided gifts;
Tokens designed the heart to touch
And books whose atmosphere uplifts;
But one dire fear hangs o'er my heart,
Nor will be quenched by mere avowals—
I dread those latest works of art,
Those hideous, ghastly cross-stitch towels!

Atrocities of bronze or brass
I've learned to take with smiling face;
For gold-bedaubed Bohemian glass
I gush my thanks with artless grace.
I'll even stand hand-painted plaques
Or gilded and beribboned trowels;
Or plaster casts or monk pipe-racks—
But not those fearful cross-stitch towels!

They have designs in reds and blues,
Of men bizarre and houses queer;
Strange landscapes of most vivid hues
And children that are "quaint" and "dear."
Oh, Fate, send any simple thing—
A box of sweets—a book of Howells'—
A decorated ball of string—
But save me from those cross-stitch towels!

OUT OF ALL PROPORTION

ON Christmas eve, as pretty Jane came tripping
down the stair,
The spicy smell of Christmas greens pervaded all
the air.
"Now this I cannot understand," said Jane. "Why
is it so?
A hundred sprays of holly and but one of mistletoe!"

RETRIBUTION

MY daughter, surely you've received
Full many a Christmas present.
What makes you look so sad and grieved?
Why can't you look more pleasant?"

"Oh, mother dear," Susanna sniffed,
"To-morrow I must write
A note of thanks for every gift
That I've received to-night!"

A NEEDED INSTITUTION

OH, sir, what is this place so strange,
Filled full of trinkets fine?"
"This is the Christmas Gift Exchange,
A clever plan of mine.

Your misfit presents here may be
Exchanged for others that you see."
I turned my head and laughed aloud
To see the eager, hurrying crowd.

BALLADE OF HUMAN NATURE

I GET so tired of Christmas cheer,
  Of holly, bay and mistletoe;
Though Christmas comes but once a year,
  I'm always glad to see it go.
  I hanker for the streamlet's flow,
The blossoms on the apple-trees,
  The balmy morn, the noontide glow—
At Christmas time I long for these.

Enough of winter bleak and drear,
  Enough of ice and frost and snow.
I want to see the buds appear,
  I want to see the green things grow.
  The meadows where the cattle low,
The mountain air, the ocean breeze,
  The seaside's gay and glittering show—
At Christmas time I long for these.

Of course, when summer's really here,
  And days are long and hot, I know
I'll sigh for winter cold and clear
  And wish for old Boreas' blow.
  But now I wander to and fro,
I want the flowers and birds and bees,
  A wheel to ride, a boat to row—
At Christmas time I think of these.

L 'Envoi

Life, listen to my tale of woe:
The human race is hard to please.
The summer days are gone, and so
At Christmas time I think of these.

EXPLAINED

I LOVE dear Mr. Santa Claus,
He has such jolly ways;
Why, every year a visit here
On Christmas eve he pays,
And puts up wreaths of holly leaves
To mark the holly-days.

WANTED: A LOOKER

A GOOD position for the right party. Annual employment guaranteed to one who fulfills all requirements. A lady who receives a great many Christmas presents experiences difficulty in getting her friends to notice and admire them sufficiently. She will therefore pay a good salary to a professional Looker.

He must be or appear to be interested in the gifts, both collectively and individually. He must be intelligent and appreciative, but never disparaging. He must not tell of gifts of superior quality received by himself or his friends. He must be capable of expressing surprise, amazement and delight as the gifts are opened, and reiterate these emotions as he reviews the gifts at subsequent intervals. His stock of adjectives must be large and varied, his enthusiasm unfailing, and his patience unshakable. Pleasant address and good humor are indispensable, and a sincere devotion to his work will insure ample reward, as the advertiser has suffered many Christmases from the discomforts of having her array of gifts ignored or carelessly inspected by indifferent friends and neighbors.

A BALLADE OF CHRISTMAS BURDENS

THE burden of gay greeting. Vain delight,
For who among us means a word we say?
In hackneyed speech we clothe our message trite,
And idly voice the wishes of the day.
We smile and bow in our accustomed way,
While our indifference we try to hide,
Stifling our boredom, striving to be gay;
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of much giving. Every year
We realize anew the fearful fraud
This custom is. And then, albeit we sneer,
We buy afresh the bauble and the gaud.
Hoping thereby to win a hollow laud,
Or gain a compliment to feed our pride;
Contented if the giddy world applaud—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of scant shekels. Woe impends
The wight whose way is with this danger fraught;
Lured by the Spirit of the Times he spends
More than he meant to and more than he ought.
And when he views the gew-gaws he has bought,
And sees his empty pockets yawning wide,
He sadly bows his head in anxious thought—
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of swift shopping. Crowded streets
And rushing messengers our way impede.
Our innocence the wily fakir cheats,
And fleeces us, weak victims to his greed.
Or haply haughty clerks pay us no heed.
At our approach they partly turn aside
Until our ire our patience doth exceed;
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

The burden of great eating. Other days,
It matters not so much how we may dine;
But at this festival tradition says
We must bestir, and kill the fatted kine.
The board must groan 'neath rarest food and wine,
Boar's head and wassail bowl we must provide
That our digestion we may undermine;
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

L'Envoi

Comrades, and ye who Christmas pleasures seek,
These timely thoughts to you I would confide;
Harken unto the wisdom that I speak:
This is the end of every Christmas-tide.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

I KNOW the Christmas gifts I send
  Will be received with praises;
But fifty times to-night I've penned
  The same old hackneyed phrases.

"Best Christmas wishes"—"Christmas love"—
  "With merry Christmas greeting"—
I must confess I'm weary of
  Those same old words repeating.

With pen in hand, at each I pause,
  And sit like any dumb thing;
I'd like to write, "Take this, because
  I *have* to send you something!"

IN ABSENCE

A Rondeau

ON Christmas Day as far and near
The bells ring out their message clear,
Your thoughts will turn to me, I know,
And mine to you as swift will go
To tell you that I love you, dear.

And those whom you may see and hear
Will not give greeting more sincere
Than this I send across the snow
On Christmas Day:

Amid the mirth and merry cheer
Of this glad time that crowns the year,
Haply beneath the mistletoe
I'll shyly whisper, sweet and low,
A soft ***je t'aime*** just for your ear,
On Christmas Day.

A STERLING NUISANCE

AS Christmas Day is nearing,
My spirits fall, alas!
I know the fate I'm fearing
Will shortly come to pass.
When parents, friends and lover
Their Christmas boxes bring,
I'll find beneath each cover
Some little silver thing.

I've every silver trinket,
And duplicates beside;
My bureau! one would think it
The bureau of a bride.
But Florence, Ruth and Mabel
To one tradition cling,—
For desk or dressing-table
Some little silver thing.

They know books give me pleasure,
They know I'm fond of plates;
A picture I would treasure,
I'd like a pair of skates.
I'll struggle to look pleasant,
But as I cut the string
I know I'll find each present
Some little silver thing.

Jack has his gift selected,—
He says it's small and bright;
It's something I expected—
The case is lined with white;
From what he said, it ***could*** be
A pearl and opal ring;
But, oh! suppose it should be
Some little silver thing?

THE BACHELOR'S CHRISTMAS SPOILS

ONE odious onyx ornament obtrusively obnoxious.
Two trumpery tambourines trimmed with tassels.
Three thingumbob thermometers thoroughly theatrical.
Four flamboyant four-in-hands fit for a farmer.
Five foolish fancy-work frames for photographs.
Six silly slipper-cases sewed with scarlet silk.
Seven superfluous shaving-balls scented with sachet.
Eight excruciating etchings executed in the early eighties.
Nine knitted neckties noticeably nauseating.
Ten trashy trinkets terribly trivial and tawdry.
Eleven embroidered eyesores expensive and effeminate.
Twelve tinsel-trimmed traps truly tragical.

FOREBODINGS

MY Christmas Gifts! I see them now!
But not in recollection.
No; 'tis prophetic eyes, I vow,
That make the sad inspection.

There'll be a lot of silver things,
(Each sillier than the other);
A motor hood with silken strings,
(The kind that makes you smother).

And boudoir shoes, all fleecy lined,
(No one could ever use 'em);
Hatpins,—by some weird art designed,—
(I truly hope I'll lose 'em!)

Burnt leather! Well, my brain just storms
To think of bags and pillows!
And baskets in outrageous form
Of twisted greenish willows.

The Christmas novelty this year
Is patterns done in cross stitch;
I'll get so much of it, I fear,
I'll wish it were a lost stitch.

Receptacles of every kind,—
Covers, receivers, cases;

To hold such things as no sane mind
  Could dream of in such places!

Ah, well, I'd strive to be polite,
  And bear these dire inflictions,
But thought of notes that I must write
  Rouses my maledictions.

To say, for that old foolish stuff:
  "Just what I wanted, Lydie!"
"I cannot thank you half enough!"
  "I simply love that tidy!"

Well, now I have my mind outspoke,
  I'll turn to something pleasant;
I'll finish that embroidered yoke
  For Janey's Christmas present.

HER CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

WHY do I have to shop?
Upon my word,
'Tis utterly absurd
The way I race
And chase
From place to place!
The way I madly run from store to store,
The bargains looking o'er;
Trying to find some novel gift for Anne,
Or Dan,
Or Nan,
Or hunting something new for Uncle Steve;
Seeking strong toys
For Gertrude's boys,—
They'd break a cannon-ball, I do believe!
And all I buy, no doubt
The children would be better off without.
Nor do their elders care a cent about
The little silver things, or blue delft clocks,
Burnt leather fancy-work, embroidered stocks,
Which they mendaciously pronounce the very
Things they desire to make their Christmas merry!
Ah, well,
If I the truth must tell,
I do the same;
My fellow-sufferers I ought not to blame.
So on I go, like any jaded hack;

HER CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Buying, exchanging, often sending back.
Pushed by the populace, jammed by the crowd,
Muttering imprecations deep, not loud.
So on I go,—
But somehow, do you know?
I rather like it after all.
Were I a millionaire, with servants at my call,
To none would I entrust
My Christmas shopping. No, I ever must
Do that myself. It is my great delight
To shop at Christmastide from morn till night.

AT THE BARGAIN COUNTER

TEN Christmas shoppers standing in a line;
One got elbowed out, then there were nine.

Nine Christmas shoppers, shopping very late;
One fell asleep, and then there were eight.

Eight Christmas shoppers, shopping till eleven;
One fainted dead away, then there were seven.

Seven Christmas shoppers, cross as two sticks;
One flounced herself away, then there were six.

Six Christmas shoppers, only just alive;
One remembered baby! Then there were five.

Five Christmas shoppers, pawing bargains o'er;
The salesgirl snubbed one, then there were four.

Four Christmas shoppers, nervous as could be;
One smelled smoke, and then there were three.

Three Christmas shoppers, making great to-do;
One had hysterics, then there were two.

AT THE BARGAIN COUNTER

Two Christmas shoppers, with shopping not half
done;
One thought she saw a mouse, then there was one.

One Christmas shopper, who'd spent all her mun;
Her husband came for her—then there was none.

THE CHRISTMAS NIGHTMARE

ON the night before Christmas there's something amiss
With your placid, habitual slumber;
You suddenly find that your overworked mind
Is harassed by cares without number.

You are stirred by the thought that the gifts you have bought
Are less than your friends have expected;
And your heart is beset by a nervous regret
That the things were not better selected.

You cannot lie quiet, your brain's in a riot,
And fears for the dinner oppress you;
The goose may be tough or the cook in a huff,
Or the children's behavior distress you.

You can't get your breath, you're worried to death
Lest the weather may turn out unpleasant;
Your eyes ache and burn as you toss and you turn
And think over every one's present.

That Dresden affair, expensive and rare,
Is really quite wasted on Dora;
And you're tempted to wish you had given the dish
To Alice or Ethel or Flora.

Dick never will look in that beautiful book,
  So you think you'll transfer it to Maisie;
Then you'll have to give Dick that ebony stick—
  But by this time you're just about crazy.

As you tumble and roll, a fear thrills your soul
  Lest some one left out should feel slighted.
Though you doubt if you're able to seat round the
      table
  The guests you've already invited.

The cream may fall short—there's only a quart—
  And some one may keep dinner waiting;
Then the soup will get cold, and Edward will scold,
  And give the late guest a berating.

You flounder and sigh—you're ready to cry—
  Coy Sleep won't allow you to win her;
Oh, the night before Christmas holds nothing of
      bliss,
  If you've asked your relations to dinner.

A TRUE ADVERTISEMENT

Earnest Truepenny and Company
Invite attention to their stock of Christmas Goods.
Prices raised especially for the holiday season!
Old Goods represented as New!
Special showing of shop-worn Novelties!
We offer many splendid swindles for Rich Buyers, as all our wares are guaranteed strictly as Misrepresented.
Faked Antiques at Prices Higher than Real Ones!
Positively None Genuine!
Come Now!!
Prices 'Way Up!
Great Reduction will be made after the Holidays.
—Gifts Specially Unsuitable for Men—
Smoking Jackets marked up from $10 to $15.
Slippers at double price.
Choice selection of hideous Neckties offered without regard to cost.
—Gifts Specially Inappropriate for Women—
Our 1906 Hats—Sold at the price of this year's models!
Exceptionally poor values in Silk Stockings.
The absurdly high prices of our Trashy Gimcracks tempt all Christmas Shoppers!!

A TRUE ADVERTISEMENT

ART DEPARTMENT

Hand-painted Atrocities, greatly above the usual Prices!
At the Christmas Season nothing is so unacceptable as a Useful Gift!
Try Our
"Ready-To-Wear-Out" Clothing!
Tight fits for
Stout People.
Last Year's Styles Marked Up.
Come early or late! You will find a stuffy atmosphere, crowded counters, and tired clerks!
Honest as our Advertising is, you will find our goods even less desirable than we represent them!

CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES

AS Christmas Day was drawing near, upon a lady called
A gentlemanly person, who was old and somewhat bald.
"I am the Christmas agent," he announced. "I'd like to know
How many and what presents you're intending to bestow."
Said the lady, "Here's my list, sir; but tell me, ere you leave,
What loving Christmas token from my friends I shall receive."
She heard his answer with surprise, then laughed in gay derision;
"Call round a little later, sir; my list needs much revision."

A GREAT AUTHOR

ABOU BEN AUTHOR (may he keep his health),
Awoke one night from a fair dream of wealth;
And saw, within his curio furnished room,
Sitting right on his best Etruscan tomb,
An angel, scribbling on a paper pad.
Exceeding fame had made Ben Author bad;
So to the vision he just spoke right out:
"Who's Who are you? and what are you about?"
The angel answered, with a three-inch smile,
"I write the names of those whose work's worth while."
"Then I'm up top," said Abou. "No, not that,"
Stammered the angel. "Pooh!" said Abou, "Scat!
But ere you flit, note me as one, I pray,
Who won't write Christmas rubbish, anyway!"
The angel soared away from Abou's place
Threading the window with a sinuous grace,
He floated slowly Heavenward, the while
His face let out another inch of smile.
And as he wiggle-waggled through the mist,
He hastily revised his little list,
Till (as perhaps, dear reader, you have guessed),
Abou Ben Author's name led all the rest!

BALLADE OF CHRISTMAS OF LONG AGO

THE old folks sigh for the by-gone days,
Of simple mirth and homely cheer;
They sigh for the prim, old-fashioned ways,
That marked the Yule-tide of yester-year.
To the straight-laced customs they will adhere
As long as they live on earth, I trow,
Their early observances they'll hold dear—
But who wants the Christmas of Long Ago?

Their memory veils with a golden haze
The rigid rules and the laws severe;
The pompous manner and stilted phrase,
The absurd old wigs and the costumes queer.
With mincing tread and with mien austere
They gravely walked through their dances slow;
These quaint old memories we revere—
But who wants the Christmas of Long Ago?

The modern festival wins our praise,
The Christmas Day that is drawing near;
A season of dances, feasts and plays,
When the Lord of Misrule runs his gay career.
Let the chimes ring out with their music clear,
Let the Yule-log blaze and the punch-bowl flow,
We'll drink to the Puritan Pioneer—
But who wants the Christmas of Long Ago?

L 'Envoi

Rose, the mistletoe hangs from the chandelier,
I see you smile, though the light burns low;
Hurrah for the Christmas that now is here!—
And who wants the Christmas of Long Ago?

A FINE OLD MAN

"YOU are old, Father Christmas," the young woman said,
"Yet whenever you visit the earth,
You laugh like a boy and you shake your white head
And chuckle in gladness and mirth."

"My dear," Father Christmas replied, with a grin,
"I'll tell you the reason of that.
In my youth I was solemn and, therefore, quite thin,
So I thought I would laugh and grow fat."

"You are old, Father Christmas," she went on to say,
"And the old oft are stingy and mean;
Yet you strew welcome gifts in a free-handed way,
Such lavishness never was seen."

"In my youth," Father Christmas replied, with a wink,
"I had an extravagant wife;
And the prodigal habits she taught me, I think,
Affected me all through my life."

"You are old," said the maiden, "as surely you know,
Yet when you come earthward, each year,
You always remember to bring mistletoe
To hang on the great chandelier."

"In my youth," Father Christmas replied, and he
smiled,
"Ere ever to mortals I came;
I studied young hearts, and I find, my dear child,
Their wishes are ever the same."

WHEN SANTA CLAUS AND CUPID MET

(A Legend)

WHEN Santa Claus and Cupid met
One day, the boy flew in a pet
About some berries small and red.
"They're mine! I want them!" Cupid said.
But Santa Claus replied, "What folly!
Why, child, this is my Christmas holly."
"I don't care!" cried the angry elf,
"I want those berries for myself!"
A teardrop shone in either eye.
"Tut, tut!" said Santa Claus; "don't cry;
I'll keep my holly berries red,
These white ones you may have instead."
"All right," and Cupid gayly smiled
(He's nothing but a silly child).
"The white ones just as well will do;
I rather think they're prettier, too."
So, ever since at Christmas merry
Santa Claus brings the holly berry.
But Cupid (as perhaps you know),
Brings for his gift the mistletoe.

THE AUTO-CHRISTMAS

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State age and size of each member of your family, and each expected guest. Then we will send you a complete, self-acting, fire-proof

AUTO-CHRISTMAS

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The machine runs by electricity, and, if set up and adjusted the night before Christmas, it will fill the children's stockings. Then, during the night, it will decorate the house with holly wreaths, and will place a large and well-filled Christmas tree in your back parlor, completely equipped with gifts, ornaments, candles, and an angel a-top. Next, it will provide a complete and sumptuous Christmas dinner, well

cooked, well served, and tastefully decorated. Guaranteed to make the table groan in the traditional manner. After this, it will provide games and dances, or any form of entertainment desired. It will hang a bunch of mistletoe on the chandelier, and serve a delightful Christmas supper.

This description does but slight justice to our wonderful invention, which must be tried to be appreciated. There are various attachments, such as snapdragon, boars' heads, and wassail-bowls, which will be furnished at a slight extra charge. Our '99 model is, of course, the finest, and has all improvements up to date, including an automobile ride and a Yule gas log; but our '98 and '97 models may be had at reduced rates, and will prove attractive to many who are looking for Christmas bargains.

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The price may seem a large outlay of money, but remember that you save yourself all worry and planning in the matter; all hurried and unsatisfactory shopping at the crowded counters; all disappointment and mortification at ill-cooked puddings or tough turkeys; and, best of all, there is no danger of that tired feeling the day after. So send at once for samples and full particulars to

The Auto-Christmas Co.,
No. 25 Yule Street.

A BALLADE OF THE MISTLETOE BOUGH

I KNOW of a hostelry jolly,
  Resplendent with garland and spray
Of laurel and red-berried holly,
  Of evergreen branches and bay.
  The host and his welcome are gay,
The feasting is good, and I vow
  They are merry companions who stay
At the sign of the Mistletoe Bough.

Oh, season of frolic and folly,
  We bow to thy roystering sway;
And even the cat and the collie
  Are eager to join in the fray.
  Our cares seem but lightly to weigh,
There's nothing but merriment now,
  As we carol a blithe roundelay
At the sign of the Mistletoe Bough.

See merry-eyed, rosy-cheeked Polly,
  In marvelous dainty array,
And Rosalie, Kitty and Dolly
  Their smiles and their graces display.
  I greet each fair maid in a way
You'd never suppose they'd allow;
  Yet with perfect decorum I may
At the sign of the Mistletoe Bough.

L'Envoi

Kriss Kringle, thy favor we pray;
With long life and good fortune endow
All those who remember thy day
At the sign of the Mistletoe Bough.

CHRISTMAS ON MT. OLYMPUS

'TWAS the night before Christmas; Olympia's height
Was ringing with laughter and blazing with light.
The gods and the goddesses (see Murray's Manual)
Were holding their regular Christmas-Eve annual.
In the gorgeous Olympian dancing-pavilion
Apollo was leading the mazy cotillion,
When out at the gate there arose such a clatter,
The deities ran to see what was the matter.
There they found Santa Claus in a terrible plight,
His sleigh, heavy-laden, had broken down, quite.

Poor man! He had started in gladness and mirth
With his yearly consignment of presents to earth.
And now, each fair gift designed for a mortal
Was dumped on the ground at Olympia's portal!
But the gods and the goddesses generous are,
And Aurora said, "Santa, I'll lend you my car."
The offer was gladly accepted. Saint Nick
Transferred all his bundles surprisingly quick.

Then he said, "Your assistance is of such great worth
I'll bring you a beautiful present from earth.
Now if you and the others will mention, my dear,
Whatever you want that you can't get up here—"
"You love!" cried Aurora, with jubilant squeal,

"I'll take, if you please, an automobile!"
"You darling!" cried Venus, "pray bring me from town
A big picture hat and a new Paris gown."
"My order," said Mercury, "is roller skates."
Achilles said, "I'd like a pair of heel-plates."
Fair Niobe sobbed, "Since I always must cry,
Of handkerchiefs bring me a goodly supply."
Said Laocoön, "They say whisky's a cure
For snakebite—if so, I should like some, I'm sure."
"I'm not quite in form," said old Hercules,
"So I'd be obliged for a punching-bag, please."
Said Ajax, "A lightning-rod, sir, is my choice."
While Mars said a Krupp gun would make him rejoice.
Minerva (you know she's exceedingly wise)
Said a late Boston Transcript she greatly would prize.
Well, Santa Claus finally finished his list,
And said, "Is this all? Is any one missed?"
"Well, yes," Æsculapius said, "if you please,
I've encountered the old-fashioned forms of disease;
But my pupils and I think 'twould greatly delight us
If you'd bring us a patient with appendicitis."
"All right!" answered Santa Claus, "I shall obey.
Merry Christmas to all!" and he hurried away.

CHRISTMAS RUBAIYAT

I

Wake! For your son who Scatters into Flight
Your Morning Nap, ere yet the Day is Bright,
  Shouts "Merry Christmas!" with ear-splitting Yell,
And grabs his Stocking with a Wild Delight.

II

Why, all the Saints and Sages who Suggest
That Christmas Giving is a Bore or Pest,
  Are foolish Prophets. Treat their words with Scorn!
They're Cross Dyspeptics; They should be Suppressed.

III

And those who Husbanded the Golden Chink,
And those who Flung it Gaily o'er the Brink,
  Alike at Christmas Time draw on the Fund,
Which, saved up Once, Men spend without a Think!

IV

Indeed, indeed, Retrenchment oft Before
I swore; but did I mean it when I Swore?
  And then,—then Christmas came! and Purse in Hand
I made a Bee-line for the nearest Store.

V

They say "The Lion and The Lizard" keep
Delightful Christmas Presents; good yet Cheap.
I'll go there. For I really can't Afford
The Fine Shops where the Prices are so Steep.

VI

A Book of Verses, say, for Mary Anne;
A Smoking Set or Mandolin for Dan;
Perhaps a Chafing-Dish for Geraldine,
Some little Silver Thing will do for Nan.

VII

Waste not your Hour, nor in the Foolish Chase
Of Something that will be Just Right for Grace.
Better give her a Handkerchief or Book,
Than spend a Day, racing from Place to Place!

VIII

Strange, is it not? That of the Myriads who
Do Christmas Shopping every year, like you,
Not one begins Betimes; but waits until
The Shops are crowded, so she can't get Through!

IX

We are no Other than a Moving Row
Of Christmas Shoppers, as we Come and Go:
Trying to find that Fairy-Story Shop
Where Quality is High, and Price is Low!

X

But Helpless Pieces of the game Kriss Plays
Upon the Checker-Board of Christmas Days;
  Hither and Thither, Hustle, Rush and Push,
Then One by One drag home with one Small Vase!

XI

But under Cover of Departing Day
The Christmas Tree bloomed out in Brave Array!
  Once more, on Christmas Eve I proudly stood
Surrounded by Be-ribboned Shapes so Gay.

XII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, Great and Small
They stood along the Floor and by the Wall,
  And some were tied with Holly-ribbon Bows,—
And some were 'most too Big to Tie at all!

XIII

Then to the Lip beneath the Mistletoe
I leaned. The Secret of my Life to know.
  And Lip to Lip, I murmured, "Now's Your Chance!
Be quick and Kiss her, ere you Let Her go!"

XIV

I think the Mistletoe began to Shake
With silent Laughter. Then it Softly Spake:
  "Kiss her," and, ah, the Ruby Lip I kissed!
How many Kisses might it Give and Take!

XV

Ah, Love, if Anybody said, "You may
Omit the Celebration of the Day,"
  Would we not Eagerly and Quickly choose
To Celebrate it just the Same Old Way?

XVI

When You and I are passed away, no Doubt
The world will still have Christmases about;
  Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As a Man heeds Cigars his Wife picks Out!

A BALLADE OF CHRISTMAS

THE Christmas music's heard to-day,
The gladdest music of the year;
The bells ring out, the deep chimes play,
Carols are sung by voices clear.
Happily on the maiden's ear
Sounds the gay music of the ball;
But though these sounds we love to hear
The Christmas spirit's best of all.

The Christmas gifts make fine array
And to our hearts our friends endear;
Though some loved ones are far away,
Remembrance makes them seem more near.
What though some gifts are strange and queer,
Though some are great and others small,
We care not how they may appear—
The Christmas spirit's best of all.

The Christmas table's fine display
Invites us all to goodly cheer;
The children shout with laughter gay,
Nor elders' admonition fear.
Beneath the gleaming chandelier
The mistletoe hangs in the hall;
And in our hearts, true and sincere,
The Christmas spirit's best of all.

L'Envoi

Comrade, throughout our life's career,
When Christmas holds us in its thrall
Time-honored ways we must revere—
The Christmas spirit's best of all.

A SAD FATE

A paper Fairy on a Christmas tree
Fell in love
With a Candy Soldier whom she chanced to see
Just above;
But the object of her care
Fixed his calm and painted stare
On a gay and debonair
Sugar Dove.

Now the Candy Soldier didn't want to gaze
On the bird,
For the Paper Fairy with her pretty ways
He preferred;
But he couldn't move his eyes,
So he heaved some heavy sighs
Which the Fairy, in surprise,
Overheard.

Then the Candy Soldier asked the Paper Fay
For his mate,
But before her answer she could coyly say
'Twas too late.
For a lot of girls and boys
Came and took away the toys,
And thus ended all their joys—
Cruel Fate!

POOR RICHARD JUNIOR'S PHILOSOPHY

Then Yule remember me.
Christmas levels all ranks.
Celebration is the thief of time.
A fair exchange is no certainty.
One good gift deserves another.
Presents speak louder than words.
The patient club-waiter is no loser.
Never put a gift cigar in your mouth.
Presents make the heart grow fonder.
Gifts show which way the wind blows.
A friend in need is a friend at Christmas.
The proof of the Christmas is in the eating.
A gift in the hand is worth two on the tree.
It is more expensive to give than to receive.

THE MERMAID

On Christmas Eve a merman tall
Went blithely forth to make a call
  Upon a mermaid fair;
He found her, as you've doubtless guessed
Upon a rock in seaweed dressed
  A-combing of her hair.

Now as the merman looked around,
No spray of mistletoe he found,
  And he remarked the lack.
"You know I have no feet, and so,
How can I have a mistletoe?"
  The mermaid answered back.

AN EXPLANATION

The holly wreaths hung on the wall,
  With shining leaves of glossy green;
And baby Polly's fingers small
  Patted the berries' scarlet sheen.

With sparkling eyes and cheeks aglow,
  She cried: "Mamma, mamma, I say,
Just see the berries! Now I know
  Why Christmas is a holly-day!"

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